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**Testimony of
Marc Anthony Gallucci, Esq.
Appropriations Committee- Human Services Subcommittee
Hearing on February 23, 2022**

I am testifying today in support of the request of Connecticut's five Centers for Independent Living for an additional \$1,000,000 in funding to meet the unmet needs of Connecticut's adults and children with disabilities.

No doubt you will hear from many folks telling again explaining the history of CIL funding in Connecticut and the severely diminished capacity of the CILs to provide needed services because of State cuts to not only our CORE funding but also our Assistive Technology funding and other funds. It is not my purpose to reiterate those.

Rather, I wish to educate you about the impact of the lack of funding and what could happen if CILs are properly funded as they are in other States.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, people with disabilities, and especially children and students with disabilities have been hit especially hard. They have been isolated, lost access to many of the services and activities that they had and need, and are in desperate need for services to restore some normalcy to their lives. I note that there have been many news reports that this Legislature recognizes this and is looking for ways to increase funding to address mental health issues and the need for recreational and social skills development and opportunities to end isolation.

Why not fund Connecticut's CILs so that they can be a part of this response?

Years ago, we used to have Assistive Technology funding and a full-time Assistive Technology specialist on staff until the State decided to discontinue this. The AT staff person would assist consumers to explore technological options to solve problems

caused by their disabilities and an inaccessible environment. The AT Specialist would even assist them with obtaining financial assistance to obtain the technology and the training to use it.

More recently, we had a small amount of funding through the CARES Act to assist people to obtain devices, training, and broadband services so they could access services online such as tele-medicine, counseling services, and grocery shopping. But this abruptly came to an end in May of this past year. As a result, we have scores of individuals who are on the wait list and now will never be served. Undoubtedly, there are hundreds more who could benefit from these services.

Why not increase the funding for CILs so that they can hire AT Specialists and reestablish these desperately needed AT services? Massachusetts has these AT specialists on staff. So does NY.

Our Summer Youth Self-Empowerment Camps (which are funded entirely with the efforts of our fundraising events) have experienced an unprecedented number of parents and educators who want to apply for the very limited number of spaces available. We are hearing over and over again how the students and children with disabilities can't find appropriate Summer Camps, learning experiences, and recreational opportunities that will accommodate their special needs.

Why not increase the funding for Connecticut's CILs so that they can expand existing programs or develop new ones to address the isolation, social and academic regression, and lack of physical and health development of our young people with disabilities? Massachusetts and NY provide this funding. In fact, in Massachusetts the CILs there not only get way more CORE funding than CT's CILs (\$550,000 each compared with CT's \$92,000 each) but they also get an additional separate funding stream of \$125,000 per Cil for Youth Transition programs.

Don't you think it would be a good idea, now that the State is out of fiscal distress, that this General Assembly restore the lost capacity of CT's CILs by increasing the funding and partnering with us to address the mental health and isolation problems experienced by our citizens with disabilities?

Let's increase funding for Connecticut's five Centers for Independent Living now!

Respectfully Submitted:

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